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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9195
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 4915
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RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU 1124
RUEHGZ/AMCONSUL GUANGZHOU 9118
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 6108
RUESLE/AMCONSUL SHANGHAI 8509
RUEHSH/AMCONSUL SHENYANG 5070
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RHHJJAA/JICPAC HONOLULU HI
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RHHMUNA/USPACOM HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 000916

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [TW](#)

SUBJECT: COMPETING DEMONSTRATIONS FOR AND AGAINST PRESIDENT CHEN

REF: TAIPEI 903

Classified By: AIT Deputy Director David Keegan,
Reasons: 1.4 (b/d)

¶1. (C) Summary: The ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and pan-Green allies held a large march and rally on Saturday March 18 to "shout out to China," support President Chen Shui-bian, and rebuild party morale following a series of election reverses. The event coincided roughly with the first anniversary of a march against China's "anti-secession law" as well as several anniversaries of earlier events in Taiwan's democratic development in the face of PRC intimidation. On Sunday March 19, the opposition People First Party (PFP) and pan-Blue allies held a rally to "shout out to Chen Shui-bian." This rally marked the second anniversary of the election eve shooting of Chen and Vice President Annette Lu, an event that many pan-Blue supporters believe was staged by Chen to "steal" the 2004 election from then Kuomintang (KMT) Chairman Lien Chan and PFP Chairman James Soong. End Summary.

DPP March and Rally: Yes to Chen, No to China

¶2. (C) While claims by organizers that 170,000 supporters participated in the DPP march and the rally at Ketagalan Boulevard may be inflated, a variety of groups joined the march, including various Taiwan independence organizations, Tibetan independence activists, and Taiwan towel factory workers protesting PRC towel "dumping." "The whole world is watching Taiwan's democracy," read one huge banner featured in the rally. Speakers included President Chen, Vice President Lu, and Premier Su Tseng-chang. President Chen asserted that the 23 million people of Taiwan should decide their own future democratically and that unification should not be the only option. Even if it meant his being recalled, Chen stated, he would still "cease the functioning/application" of the National Unification Council/Guidelines. For Taiwan to become a normal democratic country, it should not only have the right of referendums, but it must also have the right to freely choose Taiwan's future. Chen stressed: Taiwan is a sovereign, independent country; Taiwan's national sovereignty belongs to the 23 million people of Taiwan; only the 23 million people of Taiwan have the right to decide Taiwan's future; Taiwan's

national sovereignty cannot be shared, taken away, or restricted; and the future of Taiwan cannot be decided by China's 1.3 billion people. Although a number of marchers carried signs calling for a new constitution, Chen did not directly address the sensitive constitutional issue in his remarks.

PPF Rally: How do I dislike thee? Let me count the ways

¶3. (C) The PFP rally, jointly sponsored by the Anti-Arms Procurement Alliance, drew about 20,000 participants to Ketagalan Boulevard on Sunday, according to police estimates, which may be high. In a lineup of speakers intended to underscore the pan-Blue opposition's unity in "shouting out to Chen," PFP Chairman James Soong, KMT Chairman Ma Ying-jeou, Honorary KMT Chairman Lien Chan, KMT LY President Wang Jin-pyng, and several legislators vied to outdo each other in blaming Chen for every conceivable problem, even the recent losses suffered by Taiwan's baseball team at the hands of Korea and Japan. Ma berated President Chen for frittering away Taiwan's economic and social advantages as he played politics with the independence-unification issue. Lien attributed several human rights problems discussed in the most recent State Department Human Rights Report to Chen's poor governance, and he also called for a new investigation of the 3/19/2004 President Chen shooting incident to determine &political8 in addition to criminal responsibility. Besides echoing Lien's call for a new 3/19 investigation, Soong proclaimed his support for maintaining the cross-Strait status quo and his opposition to "extravagant arms purchases," which, he argued, would not be needed if Chen stops promoting Taiwan independence.

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Comment

¶4. (C) Mass marches and rallies are a standard feature of Taiwan politics and are intended to raise the enthusiasm of supporters. There is no pending election or similar reason for holding these two rallies nor the KMT march and rally the preceding Saturday. Many of the outside organizations that joined the two rallies represented the more fundamentalist supporters of the two parties. Both activities were peaceful and most of the participants were older people. The high turnout for the DPP march is explained by its major effort to mobilize supporters from all over Taiwan as well as the very warm, sunny weather. Participants were in a relaxed, enthusiastic, and festive mood. Though the March 19 anti-Chen rally was far smaller, the participants were also enthusiastic and highly vocal. In recent weeks, several PFP legislators have defected to the larger KMT, which has caused resentment among the PFP leadership, especially James Soong. In a show of unity, KMT and PFP leaders have now joined together in two demonstrations over the past two weekends, one sponsored by the KMT and the other by the PFP. The KMT does not want to alienate the PFP, whose cooperation is critical in maintaining pan-Blue control of the LY, and the PFP hopes to underscore its continued relevance, despite shrinking numbers.

YOUNG